

## Editors' Foreword

Publication of this Winter Issue brings to a conclusion the first decade of activity for *The International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations*. During the course of its ten years in existence, the *International Journal* has acquired a central position in its field, both in respect of the quality and variety of its Articles and, more prominently since forging its relationship with Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers in 1992, as a key point of reference for Documentation in the international field of labour relations.

Throughout these first ten years, the *International Journal* has received unstinting support from a large number of leading individuals in its field of expertise. It is appropriate, therefore, for the Founding Editor and the Editor-in Chief to place on record their appreciation of that backing, and, in particular, their gratitude for the advice and assistance provided by the members of the International Advisory Board.

The canvass upon which international labour relations are being painted has altered dramatically during the last decade. Most notably, the whole system which, when the *International Journal* was first established, characterised the regulation of social and working life in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe has disappeared, while new systems of Labour Law have been developed in the countries of the European Union and in the European Economic Area. Yet, even these newly emerged structures have themselves undergone rapid transformation, as can be seen with the transition of Austria, Finland and Sweden from the EEA to the EU at the beginning of 1995. Nor has the phenomenon of rapid change been confined to the European Continent, with the important issues of social and labour regulation increasingly being linked to global arrangements for trade and commerce.

The ARTICLES which make up this Issue of the *International Journal* primarily reflect the pattern of change in Europe. Thus, while Sarah Vickerstaff, John Thirkell and Richard Scase present their comparative assessment of the transformation of labour relations in Eastern Europe, Gerd Scheinstock and Franz Traxler offer an institutional study of that change process, setting the emerging trade union structures against the fast-moving political backcloth which exercises such a crucial influence over current developments. In complete contrast, Lord Wedderburn offers a penetrating insight into the processes at work in the institutions of the European Union, by way of a lost fragment from Plato.

Finally, the DOCUMENTATION AND COMMENT section presents the first fruits of the Social Protocol procedure agreed at Maastricht — in the form of the recently-adopted "Works Councils Directive" — together with the Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the social aspects of the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness, Employment.

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